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SUBJECT: JUSTICE MINISTER PROMISES NO CHANGE IN STRATEGIC  
DIRECTION DURING FAREWELL MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR

REF: VILNIUS 526

11. (U) SUMMARY: Lithuania's acting Minister of Justice Gintautas Buzinskas, during the Ambassador's June 9 farewell call, said that there will be no slippage in the GOL's commitment to Jewish property restitution. He also thanked the United States for its excellent law enforcement cooperation. The Ambassador urged Buzinskas to present soon the draft amendment to the restitution law to the parliament, which would allow the process of restituting communal Jewish property to move forward. Buzinskas said he was proud of the level and quality of law enforcement cooperation with the United States, the signing of the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty, and success with extraditions. Buzinskas said that the United States could be confident that any government that emerges from coalition talks (reftel) will be a strong ally in law enforcement cooperation. END SUMMARY.

GOL COMMITMENTS ON PROPERTY RESTITUTION "NOT REVIEWABLE"

12. (U) The Ambassador told Minister Buzinskas at their June 9 farewell meeting that he hoped the Ministry will present the amendment on Jewish Communal Property Restitution to the parliament in the immediate future. While lamenting the delays the government's collapse has caused, Buzinskas said that the GOL's commitment to the legislation is "not reviewable" and that the process will go forward. Buzinskas said the Ministry needed to resolve a couple of technical issues, including adding a statement to the amendment that will detail the restitution payment schedule. He was confident that the new minister, when appointed, will take up the issue quickly. The Ambassador said that he had spoken with all the key party leaders in the parliament and they had expressed support for the legislation; the key now is to move the amendment to the parliament.

LEGAL COOPERATION

13. (U) The Ambassador congratulated Buzinskas for an active and productive tenure as Minister of Justice, overseeing substantial integration into EU law enforcement structures, the signing of the U.S.-Lithuania Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in 2005, and the expanded cooperation in law enforcement between the United States and Lithuania. The Ambassador said he hopes to see the Lithuanian fugitive Gintaras Petrikas extradited from the United States and brought to justice in Lithuania. Buzinskas noted that his team at the Ministry of Justice is talented and dedicated, and emphasized that the change in Lithuania's government will not affect cooperation with the United States.

VISA WAIVER PROGRAM

¶4. (U) Entrance into the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) remains a key goal for Lithuania, Buzinskas said, noting that expanded opportunities in the EU make it less likely that Lithuanians will misuse their U.S. visas. The Ambassador said that Lithuania has made substantial progress in meeting most of the VWP requirements and that overstays have decreased noticeably. With the refusal rate decreasing as Lithuanians better comply with the terms of their visas, the Ambassador said he hoped Lithuania will meet all the VWP criteria in the near future.

COMMENT

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¶5. (U) A law professor and former diplomat, Gintautas Buzinskas is a dependable ally in the Ministry of Justice. While his future in the Labor Party and politics is uncertain, the ability of the Ministry of Justice to implement substantial reforms and invigorate its workforce with an inflow of talented, engaged, and youthful workers bodes well for the future. We will continue to emphasize the importance of restitution and U.S.-Lithuanian law enforcement cooperation with the new government.

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